CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

VOL. 1. DECEMBER 1, 1829. NO. 8.

EDITED BY

AYLETT RAINS.

Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.—JUDE.

paralytic person was brought to him on a bed, and let down through the roof of the house where he was; and one person he cured of a withered hand in a synagogue on the sabbath-day.

Of *demoniacs*, or insane persons, he cured one in a synagogue at Capernaum, the miracle which first excited the particular attention of the public to him; another who was raging mad, and wholly intractable, in Gadara; another who, besides being insane, was both blind and dumb, presently after the calling of the twelve apostles. In this case he also relieved the daughter of a Syrophenician woman; and another young person at the foot of the mount of transfiguration. And incidental mention is made of his having cured Mary Magdalene, who had been grievously afflicted in this way, and as it is said that *seven demons* had been cast out of her.

He instantly cured a woman who had a bloody issue of many years continuance, as he was going to the house of Jairus in Capernaum; another woman who had been infirm eighteen years in a public synagogue; a lame man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem; one who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, on his return from his excursion to the coasts of Tyre and Sydon; a person who had a dropsy at the house of a chief pharisee, Luke xiv. 1. and he cured the wound made by Peter in striking off the ear of the High Priest's servant.

But more astonishing than the cure of any disease was his raising persons from the dead, of whom three are particularly mentioned, viz. the daughter of Jairus at Ca-

pernaum, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus at Bethany.

Besides these miracles of healing, there were others of a benevolent nature, as his changing a quantity of water into wine at a marriage feast in Cana; and his feeding first five thousand, and afterwards four thousand, with a small quantity of provisions.

All the miracles of Jesus were not, however, of this kind. Some of them seem calculated to shew his power over nature in general, as his stilling a tempest, his walking on the sea, his enabling Peter to do the same, and his causing a barren fig-tree to wither in the course of a night.

Other miracles are recorded in the history of Jesus, in which he does not appear to have been the agent, as in the voices from heaven, of which there were three instances; the first at his baptism, probably in the hearing of many persons, when the following words were distinctly pronounced. *This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.* The same words were pronounced on the mount of transfiguration, in the hearing of Peter, James, and John. The last was in the temple, when, in answer to his prayer in which he said, *Father glorify thy name*, the supernatural voice said, *I have glorified it and will glorify it again.*

Some of the miracles of Jesus, if they may be so called, were of a prophetical nature, as his telling Peter where he should find a large draught of fishes, and a piece of money in a fish's mouth; his telling his disciples where they should find an ass on which he might ride to Jerusalem, and a person who would shew them a proper place where he might eat his last passover; but especially his wonderfully exact prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, to take place within that generation. To these may be added his foretelling the powers that would be conferred on his apostles, and their success in preaching the gospel.

All these miracles, however, extraordinary as they are, were nothing in comparison of the prediction of Jesus concerning his own death, and resurrection, within a limited time, together with his ascension above the clouds, in the presence of a great number of his disciples.

What kind of a man must he have been, to have undertaken all this, in the circumstances in which Jesus was,

without any consciousness of supernatural assistance, and depending only upon his art and address; certainly he could not have been in the possession of his right mind, and therefore his impudent pretensions would soon have been exposed, and he would have suffered as an impostor. Let any man at this day, a man the most practised in the arts of imposture, undertake a hundredth part of what Jesus did, and see what would be his fate: and it would have been infinitely more hazardous in the case of Jesus among the Jews.

2. The cures which Jesus undertook to perform, which were always *immediately*, were, in general, of such a nature, that there was the least prospect of present relief, as fevers, palsies, leprosy, dropsy, blindness, and especially insanity. For when these cases are curable by medical treatment, it is always in a course of time, and never suddenly; and in no case was the cure left imperfect, so as to require a second application. Even when the daughter of Jairus was raised to life, she was not left in a languishing condition, so as to require time for her perfect recovery, but was immediately capable of eating. The young man whom Jesus restored to life as they were carrying him to his grave, immediately rose up, and he delivered him to his mother; and Lazarus, who had lain in the grave four days, was loosed, and his *being let go* implies his being capable of walking. In all the cases, therefore, the persons were not only recovered from a state of death, but restored to health and vigor.

3. The scale, as I may say, on which several of the miracles of Jesus were performed, was much too large to admit the suspicion of artifice. This more especially applies to the case of feeding the five, and four thousand; and in a great degree to the changing so great a quantity of water, much more than any man could carry, into wine. No imposter would have attempted any thing of the kind. To substitute a single glass of wine for one of water, or as much bread, or any kind of eatable, as a man could carry about him, and for a time conceal, might be practicable. But to provide wine for a large company, and bread and fish to suffice several thousand persons, and those after they had long fasted, and this in a desert, in the open air, where no such supply could either have been procured, or

secreted, was beyond all the power of legerdemain. Besides, it is evident from the whole story, which is related with the most perfect simplicity, that Jesus had no assistants; the apostles themselves having no knowledge of what he intended, and expressing their surprize at his proposal in the most artless manner.

4. It is equally evident that, in the greater part of his miracles, Jesus could not have availed himself of any assistance, and that there could not have been any collusion between him and the persons on whom he operated. The diseased persons were usually presented to him as they happened to come in his way, and the cures were frequently performed in the presence of enemies, who would be attentive we cannot doubt, to every circumstance that could afford any handle for suspicion.

The man who had been blind from his birth, was known to have been so by his parents, whose testimony was extorted from them in the court of judicature. Of the ten lepers who were cured at one time, nine did not so much as return to give him thanks; whereas an impostor would, no doubt, have engaged them all, not only to return, but to accompany him in his future progress, as trophies of his power. But in no one instance was this the case with Jesus. In him there was nothing of that ostentation, which is inseparable from the character of an impostor; who would naturally endeavor to make the most of every feat that he could contrive to exhibit with success. The demoniacs that Jesus restored to the use of their understanding, had, in general, been long known to all the neighborhood to have been really insane, and incurably so, especially that in Gadara.

Can it be supposed that the young daughter of Jairus, the widow's son (in the place where Jesus was, to all appearance, a perfect stranger) or Lazarus, who had been in his grave four days, many mourners from Jerusalem, evidently no friends of Jesus, attending all the time, only counterfeited death, to favor his views? In the last case Jesus was at a considerable distance when Lazarus died, and the whole history is so circumstantially and naturally related, as to vouch for its own truth. Besides, in the presence of so many enemies, what could the assistance of his apos-

tles, had they been on the spot from the beginning, have availed him?

How could Jesus have contrived, by any assistants, to produce a voice that should appear to come from heaven, with the farther appearance of the *heavens opening*, and something lighting upon his head. And, though on one of the occasions of a voice from heaven, Jesus was in the temple, it could not, at the most, have been more than under a portico; and as the place was always crowded, and the different apartments above him, or any where else, were not at his disposal, any attempt at an imposition in such a place as this, must have been desperate in the extreme.

But that there was no collusion between Jesus and the apostles, is most evident from the history of Judas, who betrayed him to his enemies. If there had been any collusion, he must have been privy to it, or have seen reason to suspect it; for, as far as appears, he had the same opportunity of knowing the secrets of the little fraternity as any other of the company, and yet he not only acknowledged the perfect innocence of Jesus, but, from remorse for what he had done, went and hanged himself.

5. With respect to many of the miracles of Jesus, it is evident that no human assistance could have availed him at all, as in stilling the tempest, walking on the sea, and causing the barren fig-tree to wither in a night. No knowledge that we *now* have of the powers of nature could encourage any person to attempt any thing of the kind, especially the two first.

It may, indeed, be said that the man with his ass, or with the pitcher of water, might have been in the places where the disciples would find them by particular appointment; but this could not have been the case with the fish that had the piece of money in his mouth. And how could Jesus have so peremptorily foretold Peter's denial of him, contrary to his own fixed resolution? Will any one say that when the lives of both were in such imminent danger, they had agreed to say, and do, what they did? But more especially, by what human means of any kind could Jesus have been enabled to foretel so particularly as he did the fate of Judea, Jerusalem, and the temple, forty years before the event, when no other person had any apprehensions of

the kind. The modern Jews pretend that he did it by his interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel. But how came Jesus to be more sagacious in the interpretation of prophecy than even the most learned Jews, the scribes and Pharisees of his time?

I shall now make a few observations of a more general nature on the improbability of such men as Jesus, and his first followers, being impostors. If we only consider their condition, and education, we may be convinced that they were by no means likely to come within the influence of such *ambition*, as would have been necessary to their undertaking so complicated a piece of imposture as they are charged with. They were, with a few exceptions, and those not of the most conspicuous among them, men of low and laborious, though not of ignoble occupations.—Also the youngest of them was probably turned thirty, which was the case of Jesus himself. Peter, who took the lead among them, was probably much older. Consequently, they were men who had acquired habits of industry.—They had also some little property, for they could make a merit of abandoning it when they became the followers of Jesus, and they were evidently sober and pious men. They were men who had had no commerce with the more elevated and splendid part of the world, so as to be fascinated by its charms, nor were they instigated to make desperate attempts to repair ruined fortunes, which is the case with most adventurers.

For men in their originally low situation and scanty knowledge, and who, as Jews, could not but know that they labored under greater disadvantage than persons of any other nation, to entertain the idea of making such a revolution in the world as they actually effected, and which they would soon find could not take place to any purpose till long after their deaths, must have been insanity in the extreme. It was to undertake to do without superior ability or superior means, what the greatest philosophers in the most learned nations had not attempted; viz. to persuade men to abandon the rites of their religion, absurd indeed, but what they had received from their ancestors, and which had been derived to them from the most remote antiquity, and on the observance of which they imagined

the prosperity of their several states depended. The scheme of persuading even their countrymen to abandon the flattering idea of a conquering Messiah, an idea which it is evident the apostles themselves did not give up without the greatest reluctance, was sufficiently extravagant, without looking any farther.

That such men as the apostles, on seeing a man work miracles, and especially a man of exemplary piety and goodness, as Jesus was, and then entertain an idea that he was the Messiah their nation expected, and that, on being called upon to attend him constantly, they should imagine that some great thing was intended for them in his kingdom, and be induced to leave their low occupations with a view to such advancement, is perfectly natural.—No man is wholly without the desire of bettering his condition, when he has a fair and reasonable prospect of doing it; and here piety and ambition would unite to make them become the followers of Jesus.

But that such plain men as these should enter into a league with a man no way superior to themselves, that they should either be deceived by him, or join with him in a scheme to deceive the world, and with the poor chance of succeeding in this, abandon the employments by which they had long subsisted, and for persons in their condition reputably, to the age of about forty; that they should agree to make him their head, and implicitly act by his orders; that when he was cut off by an ignominious death, they should pretend that he rose from the dead, and even still continue to act as by his instructions, and persist in this scheme without any consciouness of superior powers, and without any resource but in their own artifices, through the whole of a painful life, and many of them die in torment, without the rest being at all discouraged, and without confessing the imposture, exceeds any thing that we read of insanity in the history of mankind. And that such men as these should eventually succeed in their wild scheme, is altogether incredible. When we see not only undertaken, but actually carried into execution, things evidently above the power of the visible agents, it is natural, and philosophical, to attribute the effect to invisible agents. If the powers of *man* be unequal to the effect, we must have re-

course to powers *superhuman*. For every effect must have an adequate cause.

In fact, that such men as Jesus and the apostles should either form such a scheme as that of the *regeneration of the world* (for Christianity pretends to nothing less) when it required ages to effect it, and should finally succeed in it, notwithstanding all the obstacles that lay in their way, is something more extraordinary, more out of the course of nature, and therefore more properly miraculous, than any thing recorded in the gospels, and consequently less credible.

If we consider the first disciples of Jesus as *writers*, their conduct will appear as unaccountable as when they are considered as engaged in a scheme by which they could have so little prospect of imposing upon the world, and with a certainty, as they would soon find, of meeting with every kind of ill usage, and frequently dying a violent death.

They were not men of education, and probably had read nothing besides the sacred books of the Jews. Consequently, if they be supposed to have been persons who formed to themselves the idea of the character and history of Jesus as a prophet, they would no doubt, have made it to resemble that of their ancient prophets, for they had no other model to follow; and if they had meant to recommend their work to Jews, no other would have appeared likely to answer their purpose. Now, all the ancient prophets bore a great resemblance to each other, and John the Baptist very much resembled them, in that austerity which was common to them all; and this circumstance, no doubt, contributed to his good reception among his countrymen.

But the character of Jesus was a great original, exceedingly different from that of any former prophet. His general manners were pleasing, he easily mixed with the world, and occasionally partook of its enjoyments. This so much offended his countrymen, that they reproached him with it. Was this, then, a circumstance that an inventor would have adopted with a view to recommend the character to *Jews?*

Jesus' manner of discoursing and working miracles were in many respects new. Parables are not frequent in the Old Testament; but they constitute a great part of the dis-

courses of Jesus. Preceding prophets worked miracles but rarely, on particular occasions, and often with great preparation. But they occur so frequently in the history of Jesus, though a history of little more than a year, that, with respect to number, they were probably equal to all that had been performed before from the beginning of the world.

We have now seen a man of apparently no higher rank than a common carpenter, with fishermen, and other persons of no great estimation, for his companions, with the jealousy and hatred of all persons in power, or eminent for knowledge, to contend with, going about publicly curing all sick persons, under whatever disease they labored, even insanity, whenever they presented themselves; raising several persons from the dead, and performing various other miracles, of the most astonishing kind; such as twice feeding a great multitude with a small quantity of provisions, stilling a tempest, and walking on the sea. His divine mission was also attested by voices from heaven, but more especially by his resurrection from the dead, after a public crucifixion, and in such other circumstances with respect to its credibility, that it does not seem possible to imagine any others which could have so effectually ensured the belief of it in distant ages.

So important, however, in the eye of Providence, was the credibility of the gospel history, in all future ages, that the scene of miracles was not closed with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The same spirit, or power, by which Jesus worked miracles was transferred to the apostles, and other disciples of Jesus, and continued with them, as far as appears, through life, though it probably terminated with that generation. This *effusion of the spirit*, as it may be called, was promised by Jesus to his apostles, when he assured them, John xiv. 12, that after he should leave them they should do even greater things than he had done; and before his ascension he directed them to wait in Jerusalem till they should be endued with power from on high. This promise began to be fulfilled on the following Pentecost, about ten days after his ascension.

On the death of Jesus all his disciples were, as might have been expected, from their having no idea of any such

event, thrown into the greatest consternation, and dispersed. Believing him to be the Messiah, they had flattered themselves that he would, at a proper time, assume what they took to be the proper character of that high office, and appear as a king. But on his death, all their hopes were blasted; nor can it be imagined, on any principles consistent with human nature, that they would ever have appeared in public, avowing themselves to be his disciples, and acting as by authority from him, and continue to do so through life, in the face of danger and of death, unless they had been fully persuaded of the truth of his resurrection, and had actually received the powers that had been promised them; and with respect to neither of them could they have been deceived themselves. But with this supposition, their conduct, and all the following history of the planting of Christianity, is perfectly consistent. For they acted as men naturally would do in those new and peculiar circumstances.

As the history of this period is of infinite importance, it behoves us to give the closest attention to it. Though we are not in the situation of the first disciples of Jesus, exposed to persecution and death for our faith in his mission, it behoves us, as men pretending to reason, and especially with respect to religion (on which so much of our present enjoyment, as well as our future prospects, depends) not to be imposed upon by fables instead of true history, by tricks of legerdemain instead of real miracles, and by the artifices of man instead of the power of God. I shall, therefore, bring into view the particulars of the great scene that opened on the world after the death and supposed resurrection of Jesus, that we may see whether the facts correspond with the supposition of the reality of that resurrection, or not; taking it for granted that human nature was the same then that it is now, and that both they who preached Christianity, and they to whom it was preached, were *men*, as we are.

Had the apostles been men who knew that Jesus had been a mere impostor, and had chosen (for any reason that we cannot well imagine) to carry on the same imposture and act in his name, rather than in their own; and had they been acquainted with his arts, it is most probable that they

would, at least have begun with attempting something of the same kind. But the first extraordinary narrative in their history is of something quite unlike any thing that we find in the history of Jesus, and what nothing they had seen of him, or, could have learned of him, could have led them to conceive; and yet, had it been an imposition, it was the boldest that ever was thought of by the most practised cheats, and, in their circumstances, the most unlikely to succeed.

The apostles, and other disciples of Jesus, were well known to be men in the lowest ranks of life, wholly unlearned, and acquainted with no language besides their own. Of this there never was a question; and yet when they were assembled together on the day of Pentecost, after a *sound as from heaven, a rushing mighty wind* and the appearance of *flames of fire* on the heads of all the company, circumstances which it was impossible for them to have produced by art, they all began to speak distinctly and intelligibly in various languages, many of which had no affinity to each other; and yet they were perfectly understood by the natives of all those countries who were present. The amazement of these persons, who had resorted to Jerusalem from the most distant parts of the world, is expressed in the most natural manner. Acts ii. 5, There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold are not all these that speak, Galileeans? and how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born, Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians; we do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

Now I do not think it is possible to imagine any fact more decisively miraculous than this. Had it been only

one foreign language that these men had undertaken to speak so suddenly, it might have been possible that, having prepared themselves beforehand, and assisted one another, they might in some measure, have succeeded. But the scale on which this miracle was performed was much too great for the purpose of imposture. For by one or other of the company every known language was spoken, and persons to whom the languages were native, were the judges of their speaking them correctly, and by no means predisposed to make a report in favour of the speakers.

The effect corresponded to this wonderful event. Had there been any trick in it, it would soon have been exposed. But some, who understood not the language, saying that those who spake them were drunk, Peter addressed them in so forcible a manner on the subject of the death and resurrection of Jesus, of which all the company present declared themselves witnesses, that three thousand persons immediately avowed themselves converts, and were baptized. The manner in which Peter spake concerning Jesus, and his miracles, the particulars of which he had no occasion to enumerate, or bring any proof of, and such as being well known to all present, is remarkable, and such as no impostor would have ventured upon. Acts ii. 22. Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Was it possible to have made so many converts, if either the fact of speaking with unknown tongues, or the miracles of Jesus, so confidently appealed to, could have been disputed? And the effect of this address upon the people in general, who did not choose to be baptised, and thus publicly join themselves to the society of Christians, corresponded to the truth of it. Ver. 43, Fear came upon every soul. As to the faith of the professed disciples who were greatly increased, it appeared by its fruits to be of the firmest kind. Ver. 41, Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day there were added

unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. And they that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every one had need. And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Such was the great and singular miracle by which the truth of Christianity was first attested, after the ascension of Jesus; and this species of miracle was not confined to this memorable day, but continued to be a standing miracle in the Christian church, probably during the life time of the apostles; so that there was sufficient opportunity of examining the reality of it. It was, by way of eminence, denominated *the gift of the spirit*, and was always conferred on the disciples by the laying on of the hands of the apostles; being the only miracle that may be said to have been, in a manner, in their own power. The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, speaks of it as well known to, and seemingly experienced by, most of them; as exercised in his absence, and a great cause of ostentation with many of them. Writing to the Galatians, Ch. ii. 2, he appeals to this gift of the spirit as given to them in consequence of the preaching of the gospel, and not any thing that they derived from their observance of the law of Moses. And yet, both in the Corinthian Church, and among the Galatians, there were many who undervalued this apostle, and who were desirous to set up themselves and others above him. Would he then have dared to appeal, in his vindication, to a fact that was known to have no foundation? It is what no man in his senses would have done.

The history or the promulgation of Christianity by the apostles does not appear to be crowded with miracles as that of Jesus, if we except the above mentioned standing miracle of the gift of tongues, which seems to have been imparted to almost all the converts. But the public ministry of Jesus was of a short duration, and that of the apos-

tles was of many years continuance. It is probable, also, that, as was the case with respect to Jesus, only the more remarkable of the cases are recorded. But these deserve particular attention, being such as no impostors would have ventured upon, especially the first, Ch. iii. 2, which was the instantaneous and perfect cure of a man who had been lame from his birth, and who was then forty years old. It is probable, also, that he had been the greatest part of his life accustomed to beg at the gate of the temple, so that no case of real and incurable lameness could well have been better known.

When this man asked alms of Peter and John, as he did of others, when they were about to go into the temple, Peter, no doubt feeling a divine impulse, said to him, Acts iii. 6, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I to thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk, and taking him by the hand, he instantly leaped up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, leaping, and walking, and praising God. And this in the presence of a great crowd of people.

Such an event as this naturally brought together a great concourse of people; and Peter took the opportunity of addressing them, as before, on the subject of the death of Jesus and his resurrection, of which he again declared himself and his associates to be witnesses; and said that it was not by any virtue or power of their own, but by faith in him, that this miracle had been performed. He farther assured them that, though Jesus was ascended into heaven, he would return at the time of the restitution of all things, spoken of by the prophets.

This miracle, followed by this proper address, produced a great addition to the number of professed disciples, who now amounted to five thousand men. What put the reality of the miracle past all dispute, was the behavior of the great council of the nation upon the occasion. For Peter and John being called to appear before them, for preaching in so public a manner, they boldly declared, that the miracle was performed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead; and the man who had been lame being present, they had nothing to reply. They therefore content-

ed themselves with threatening them, and charging them not to preach any more in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John openly refused to obey such an order, declaring that they would obey God rather than man. The embarrassment, and the whole conduct of these magistrates can only be accounted for by supposing the truth of the fact. The story is also told with the greatest simplicity. Acts iv. 43. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man who was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside, out of the council, they conferred among themselves; saying, What shall we do to these men; for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no farther among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth no more in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor preach, in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you, rather than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had farther threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle was shewed." This public miracle was more than any other in proof of the divine mission and resurrection of Jesus, and nothing could have been more unexceptionable and decisive.

The presence of God with the apostles was awfully witnessed in the death of Ananias and Sapphira, who would have imposed upon them with respect to the price of a possession which they had sold, and pretended to have wholly given to the common stock of the church. Upon this it is said, Acts v. 12. By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, insomuch that they brought forth the sick, into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at least

the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them that were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one.

Upon this the high-priest, and the rulers of the nation, were, as might have been expected, more exasperated than ever; and still hoping to subdue them by terror, they put them in prison, Acts v. 18; but in the night they were miraculously set at liberty; and when they were sent for to appear before the council, the judges were informed that they were teaching in the temple. And the officers who had been sent to conduct them into the court said, Ver. 23, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, but when we had opened we found no man within. And presently other persons came, and said, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.

The magistrates being utterly confounded at this, and not knowing what farther to do, contented themselves with threatening them as before, and charged them not to preach any more to the people. But Peter and other apostles, having these evident tokens of the presence of God with them, answered as before, and said, Ver. 29, We ought to obey God rather than man. They also boldly repeated their testimony to the divine mission and resurrection of Jesus.

After this these magistrates thought to put the apostles to death, as they had done Jesus; but, in consequence of the prudent advice of Gamaliel, one of their body, they only ordered them to be beaten, and charged them to preach no more in the name of Jesus. This, however, was far from having the intended effect. For we read, Ver. 41, that they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. What do we see in this conduct, both of the apostles, and of the rulers of the nation, but the clearest evidence of the truth of the apostles' doctrine, and the impotence of civil power to prevent the effect of it?

I intend not to dwell upon other miracles, as the cure of Æneas, and the raising from death of Tabitha by Peter,

his second miraculous deliverance from prison, where he was confined by Herod; or many that occur in the history of Paul, as, though all tending, in a general way, to shew the presence of a divine power with the apostles, they had only local effects. But the circumstances attending the conversion of Paul himself are deserving of very particular notice.

It has often been said by unbelievers, that the truth of the facts on which Christianity is founded is not attested by unbelieving Jews or Heathens.—But it has appeared that the facts were not denied by the most inveterate enemies of Christianity in this early age, not even by the Jewish rulers, who persecuted the apostles, and would have put them to death. Besides, an enemy converted by being convicted of the truth of the facts, and ascribing them to their proper cause, becomes of course a Christian, and a friend. And the strongest attestation that can be given is that of one who, from having been a violent enemy, becomes a friend by this fair means; and such was the case of Paul.

Had the Jewish rulers, and other the most inveterate enemies of Christianity, been assembled, and have put their conviction of the truth of it upon the conversion of any one man whatever, of their own body, and acting by their direction, it would probably have been Paul, who was a most bigoted Jew, a Pharisee, and a most open enemy of the Christian name. It was probably he who procured the death of Stephen, as he is said to have consented to his death, and to have kept the clothes of them that stoned him. It is further said of him, Acts viii. 3, that he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison; so that the disciples were scattered abroad, and went to preach in distant places. But even thus they did not escape his pursuit. We read, Ch. ix. 1. that breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples, he, of his own accord, went unto the high-priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogue; that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

The conversion, therefore, of such a man as this, was

the greatest and clearest triumph that the Christian cause could have. His passions, and his interest too, impelled him to persist in his violence. And having, no doubt, heard all that had been alledged by the apostles, and other Christians, it was not easy to say what could give his mind a different impression. And yet this was effected, and though suddenly, so effectually, that he ever afterwards promoted the cause of Christianity with as much zeal as ever he had persecuted it. Nay, he bore every kind of persecution himself about thirty years, and at length died a martyr to his new principles. His motive to this could not have been either interest or reputation. For the Christians had nothing to bribe him with, and the Christian cause at that time was in no degree of estimation with any person whose good opinion he would naturally wish to engage. On the contrary, Christianity was from the first, and long after, *a sect every where spoken against.* Nothing, therefore, remained to make an impression upon his mind, but some miracle; and such he says, in his repeated account of his conversion, was the true cause of it.

As he was going to Damascus, in company with others, who, no doubt, went in order to assist him, and forward his scheme of persecuting the Christians whom he should find in that city, he was suddenly struck to the ground, and rendered blind, by a light from heaven, and immediately afterwards addressed by Jesus himself, who bade him proceed to Damascus, and said that he would there be informed what he should do.

This was not a vision in the night, or any thing that passed when he was alone, and therefore subject to illusion, but in mid-day, and in the company of his friends; and neither himself nor they appear to have had any mistrust or misgiving about the business they went upon. His companions also heard the sound of the voice, but did not distinguish the articulation.

In this state of blindness Paul continued three days, and then a Christian, named Ananias, was directed by Jesus to go to him, being assured that he had had a vision in which he (i. e. Ananias) came, and putting his hands upon him, caused him to receive his sight. After some objection on the part of Ananias, on account of the well known

principles and conduct of Paul, he went to him; when his sight was restored, and he was baptized. As soon as he was recovered he began to preach in the name of Christ, made many converts, and devoted his whole life to it. And in this he was remarkably successful.

After this great miracle, of the conversion of Paul himself, the miracles performed by him are comparatively of little moment, as the striking of Elymas blind in the presence of the governor of Cyprus, in consequence of which the governor was converted; his healing a cripple at the gate of Lystra, which led the people of that place to imagine that he was one of the gods in the form of man; his casting out a spirit of divination from a woman at Philippi: his many miracles, and especially casting out demons, at Ephesus; his raising Eutychus to life, and his curing the father of Publius the governor of Malta, and others in that island; and himself receiving no harm from the bite of a viper in that place.

The credibility of these miracles depends in part upon the testimony of the relater, who appears in many of them to have been an eye witness, but principally upon the indisputable effects of Paul's preaching, as he founded several Christian churches in the places in which the miracles are said to have been performed; which could not have been the case if the facts had not been true: the account of these transactions being published, and read in all Christian churches, while the events were recent; the continuance and flourishing state of these churches, and their constant use of this book, as well as others of the New Testament, are sufficient vouchers for their truth.

That there was something very extraordinary in the miracles of the apostles, and superior to any arts, or tricks, that were known to those who were the most practised in those things at that time, appears from the conversion, or pretended conversion of Simon of Samaria, commonly called Simon Magus. This Simon is said, Acts viii. 9, to have been a person who before time used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he himself was some great one; to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of a

long time he had bewitched them with his sorceries. Yet this Simon wondered, beholding the miracles that were done by Philip, declared himself a Christian, and was baptized. And seeing that the Holy Spirit, or the gift of speaking in unknown tongues, was conferred by the laying on of the hands of Peter, he offered him money to obtain the same power; thinking that it was the necessary consequence of some particular secret, with which he was not acquainted, and which he had no means of discovering. But Peter with just indignation, replied, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

REASONS FOR WITHDRAWING FROM THE UNIVERSALISTS.

No. III.

The third reason which constrained me to withdraw from the Universalists, is, *that I perceived among them, much of the leaven of infidelity and scepticism, and that the Universalian scheme is well calculated to lead its votaries to a downright rejection of the Holy Scriptures.*

I am aware that I am now stepping on slippery ground, and that multitudes may be offended, and turn their backs on me when they shall read the above charge. But none of these things move me. I have already been called a maniac, a hypocrite, and I know not what else, in consequence of the hardihood which I have hitherto exhibited in resisting the impertinent curiosity of modern speculatists, many of whom are greater lovers of vain jangling than of good works; and more solicitous to gain information about the affairs of another world, than to perform their duties in this. My views concerning a future state will in due time be made known. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. This by the way.

I will now proceed to sustain the charge which I have presented as a reason for my withdrawal from the Universalists; and in order that I may do this in such a way as will render my proofs most obvious, I will exhibit certain sentiments which border on infidelity, which have been ad-

vanced by popular Universalist preachers, taking it for granted at the same time, as I certainly have a right to do, that if the sceptical sentiments of a preacher be approbated, those by whom they are approbated, are themselves sceptical.

The first Universalist preacher the soundness of whose faith I will venture to question, is Mr. Brownson, editor of a paper entitled Gospel Advocate, published in Auburn, New York. This gentleman boasts of extensive patronage as an editor, and I presume not without cause; for I suppose his paper has a more extensive circulation than has any other paper of the same character in the United States. What then are the sentiments of this popular editor? You shall have a few of them, as a specimen of the rest, from his own pen. The following, is an extract from the Gospel Advocate.

"Mr. Editor,—Do you consider liberty of opinion to be unlimited? Do you think a man can be a deist or an atheist and be a good man? Do you hold that a man has any right to doubt the truth of Divine revelation, or the existence of a God? Please to answer these queries and oblige yours.

ZENO."

"To each of the above queries we say yes. We know not where to fix the limits of the liberty of opinion. And some of the best men we have ever known have been deists and atheists. Divine revelation and the existence of God are matters of faith, and no man is obliged to believe without evidence: if he has evidence he cannot help believing. A man has a perfect right to doubt the truth of any statement until it is proved true, or he has evidence enough to convince him.—*Editor Gospel Advocate.*"

Jesus Christ says, that "He that believeth not shall be damned," but Mr. B. says, "If a man has evidence he cannot help believing." *Query.*—Did Jesus give the Jews evidence of the truth of the gospel? *Answer.* He did. Did they believe on him? They did not. What was the consequence of their unbelief? "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." Here then Mr. B. and Jesus Christ are fairly at issue! "Some of the best men he has ever known have been deists and atheists;" and had a "perfect right to be so:" for if they had "had evidence, they could not have

helped believing." I leave the reader to make his own comments on the above.

Again. The same gentleman in the Gospel Advocate, vol. 7, p. 89, says, "Mr. Owen has been the acting editor of the Free Enquirer for some months past. We have read his productions with pleasure. He is a good natured man. Cares little about any man's God or creed: and what we like him for, is, he keeps his temper and manifests a truly catholic spirit."

Again. In the same vol. p. 86. "I should indeed feel more obliged to the Holy Ghost, if he had used a little more precision in his statements; and I should be much more willing to give him the credit of dictating the book, (the Bible,) if he had preserved a little more coherence in its several parts, and presented it in a manner so lucid that we should be at no loss to understand his meaning."

And again in his reply to me on the subject of Baptism, p. 90, he says, "Mr. R's. premises are objectionable. He says Christ is a lawgiver. He has commanded us to be baptized, and therefore, (right or wrong I suppose) we must obey him. Supposing Christ had commanded us as we expected his favor, to spend our lives in puffing with our breath against the wind, would Mr. R. think himself bound to obey? We think not. We care nothing about the letter of Christ's commands."

Mr. A. Kneeland who was once a distinguished luminary among the Universalists, but who has lately, through the medium of the Free Enquirer declared his disbelief in the existence of God and of a future state, as I suppose he had a "perfect right" to do, Mr. B. being the judge, in a discourse which he delivered in the city of New-York, in 1826, while he was still popular with the Universalists, expresses the following sentiment: "God is an elementary principle of real matter which adheres in caloric and oxygen, is as much material as they are and is never separate from them." See pp. 6, 8, 20, 26, 40.

Mr. Ballou who is the most celebrated preacher of Universalism in the United States, in his Notes on the Parables of the New-Testament, represents the "unquenchable fire," which is also called "hell-fire," of which our Saviour speaks in the 9th of Mark, as being the love of God.

Mr. Waldo, one of the editors of the Star, a Universalist paper, now published in this city, calls baptism a "legal bubble," and asserts that the apostles "erred in judgment" when they taught the doctrine of water baptism, even after they "had received power from on high." Now we can prove that Peter spoke on the day of Pentecost as the "spirit gave him utterance;" and that when he preached at the house of Cornelius his message was from God; and that he was in the delivery of this message to tell Cornelius "what he ought to do;" and "words by which he and all his house should be saved;" and that he only told him to believe and be baptized. And if so, then these commands, "believe and be baptized," were immediately from God, and not from the Jewish prejudices of poor old ignorant Peter. Friend W. seems to possess a disposition to crowd Peter off his apostolic throne, or at least to say to him, move a little further Peter, and give me a seat by your side! Is it not a great pity that God did not select Mr. W. and other luminaries of the Universalian academy, in the stead of his own Holy Spirit, as instructors for Peter, in order that he might have been "led into all truth?" We should then have had a gospel, in which would have sparkled the perfection of modern starlight divinity, without one acqueous spot to render it offensive to such as think Peter the apostle not well qualified to preach a pure gospel.

Mr. J. Kidwell another editor of the Star, (for the Star has three editors,) declared from the pulpit in Chillicothe, in my presence, that, "the will of God is now done on earth, as it is done in heaven, and that no man can do any thing in opposition to the Divine will." Of course all the blasphemy, drunkenness, murder, and debauchery, which have ever been in the world, are things altogether congenial to the Divine mind: and God must have spoken falsely, in those places of holy writ, in which he has expressed in the plainest language, his tremendous abhorrence of all iniquity.

Now I do not pretend, nor do I wish to be understood to say, that all Universalists have imbibed the abominable principles mentioned above. Heaven forbid! I am happy in believing that though the leaven be in the lump, the whole lump is not yet leavened! But it will be, if means

be not used to stop its progress. The viper of infidelity that stings the soul until it dies, is in the bosoms of thousands, who are fostering it as the good man did the adder! I perceived the evil and fled from it, and now prompted by charity, I show the "Universalists their danger." "If any man will be ignorant let him be ignorant." But if "any have ears to hear, let them hear."

If it be asked "why I did not remain with the Universalists in order that I might the more effectually have pointed out to them their errors," I answer, I could not live happily in Babylon. The Universalists and all other sects, except such as found their faith on the basis of gospel facts, are in Babylon, and the Divine command, is, "Come out of her my people, that you partake not of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues." Had I remained with them, I must have violated several Divine commands. This I was not willing to do; for I have a soul which must be finally either saved or lost, and which can never be saved in transgression.

Some individuals who were once my friends, have recently animadverted with some severity on the "dialogue* between the Atheist and the Universalist," which I published in the fifth number of this work. To those individuals I have only to say, I have no apologies to make. It is truth, every word truth, in so far as it was designed to expose those errors against which it was directed, and I still retain the impression that predestinarian Universalism, which denies all punishment after death, must forever fall far below Atheism in its fitness to create motives of temperance and sobriety, and I pledge myself to prove with the clearness of mathematical demonstration that this is the case, whenever the positions taken in that dialogue shall be assailed; and to do it too, by the evidences of Christianity.—Editor.

Cincinnati, Dec. 1829.

*The reader is invited to read the dialogue p. 108, in connexion with the above extracts, for by doing this, he will find that the accusations alledged by the atheist were not altogether out of place.—Ed.